

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TRIEST 00290 190917Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20  
/077 W

-----123964 190920Z /12

O R 190900Z JUN 78  
FM AMCONSUL TRIESTE  
TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0903  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL GENOA  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMCONSUL PALERMO  
AMCONSUL TURIN

UNCLAS TRIESTE 0290

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJ: LEONE RESIGNATION: A SIGH OF RELIEF AND ONE EYE  
ON THE ELECTIONS

REF: TRIESTE 0279, TRIESTE 0275

1. SUMMARY. LONG-ANTICIPATED RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT LEONE WAS GREETED IN THE NORTHEAST WITH NEAR AUDIBLE SIGH OF RELIEF BY LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS, PRIMARILY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. HOWEVER, NOT SO MUCH AS ONE WORD OR COMMENT BY ANY LOCAL DC LEADER ON THE MATTER HAS APPEARED IN PRINT. WHILE A HARD ONE TO CALL, LEONE S DEPARTURE IS PROBABLY SEEN AS A PLUS IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHO HAVE BEEN MAKING A MAJOR LOCAL EFFORT TO REJUVENATE AND RENEW THE PARTY ORGANIZATION. AS FOR THE IMPACT ON PCI ELECTION HOPES, MOST SEEM CONVINCED THAT IT WAS THE PCI SHOVE WHICH WAS DECISIVE IN PUSHING LEONE OVER THE SIDE.  
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END SUMMARY.

2. LOCAL PRESS (IL PICCOLO, IL MESSAGGERO VENETO, AND IL GAZZETTINO WITH A COMBINED CIRCULATION OF SOME 220,000) HAS GIVEN FULL PLAY TO LEONE RESIGNATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS. FRONT PAGE EDITORIALS IN ALL THREE PAPERS STRESS NEARLY IDENTICAL THEMES: (A) RESIGNATION WAS INEVITABLE AND IT

FINALLY CAME, (B) IT WAS AN HONORABLE GESTURE IN DEFENSE OF ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, AND (C) ITALY AND ITALIAN DEMOCRACY ARE NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR AND MAY IN FACT HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED.

3. AS FOR LOCAL DC POLITICAL LEADERS, THEY ARE NOT SAYING MUCH PUBLICLY AND ARE LEAVING THE TALKING TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IN ROME. SOME HAVE INDICATED TO US THAT LEONE RESIGNATION, WHILE DEVILISHLY DIFFICULT TO WEIGH, WILL PROBABLY BE A PLUS FOR THE DC. EXCEPT FOR A FEW EXPERIENCED LIST LEADERS, THE DC IS RELYING HEAVILY ON NEW FACES IN ITS BID FOR THE JUNE 25-26 REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS. THE ACCENT IS FIRMLY ON REJUVENATION AND RENEWAL. HOWEVER, WHILE THE LEONE AFFAIR CONTINUED TO FESTER IN ROME, ANY SUCH EFFORT IN FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA WAS FOR NAUGHT. MANY ARE AWARE THAT THE DC AGONIZED AND TEMPORIZED OVER THE DECISION. BUT ALL RECOGNIZED THAT THE RESIGNATION OF A CHIEF OF STATE IS NOT A DECISION TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, PARTICULARLY IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THAT IT TOOK COURAGE TO DO SO.

4. IT ALSO, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT THE PCI ROLE WAS THE DECISIVE ONE IN THE WHOLE AFFAIR AND THE COMMUNISTS ARE NOT BEING BASHFUL ABOUT CLAIMING CREDIT FOR IT. IN UDINE JUNE 15, PARTY CHIEF BERLINGUER NOTED THAT IT AAS THE PCI WHICH FINALLY TOOK A FIRM STAND TO  
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DEFEND ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND TO PRESERVE THE POLITICAL (READ PARTY) RELATIONSHIPS. MORE OF THE SAME IS EXPECTED IN BERLINGUER S MAJOR ADDRESS SCHEDULED FOR TRIESTE JUNE 17.

5. THE PSDI AND PRI (LONG-TIME DC COALITION PARTNERS IN THESE PARTS) AND THE OTHER SMALLER PARTIES ARE GENERALLY SOFT-PEDALING THE LEONE BUSINESS. THEIR FEW REMARKS TO THE PRESS AVE BEEN CIRCUMSPECT AND HAVE BEEN GENERALLY LIMITED TO PRAISE FOR LEONE S COURAGEOUS DECISION.

6. COMMENT: THE DEPARTURE OF LEONE SHOULD REINFORCE POPULAR PERCEPTIONS OF A DC COMMITTED TO THE REJUVENATION AND RENEWAL OF THE PARTY. IT, HOWEVER, ALSO PROVIDES SOME GRIST FOR THE ANTI-ITALIAN MILL OF THE TWO LOCAL SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS (FRIULI MOVEMENT AND THE SLOVENE UNION) AND ENHANCES THEIR MISCHIEF-MAKING CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE "ITALIAN" POLITICAL PARTIES. FINALLY, THE COMMUNISTS ARE TAKING CREDIT FOR PUSHING LEONE OVER THE SIDE TO PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC ITALY AND POLITICAL STABILITY. ADDING IT ALL UP, THE LEONE ISSUE, WHILE NOT UNIMPORTANT, PROBABLY WILL NOT, HOWEVER, BE A DECISIVE FACTOR IN NEXT WEEK S ELECTION. MOEN.

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PINT, IT, (LEONE GIOVANNI)  
**To:** ROME  
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